

DRAFT MINUTES FOR MARCH 3, 2011
MEETING OF THE PEDESTRIAN AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Members Present: Erwin Mack, Chair; David Anspacher, MNCPPC; Ramin Assa; John Britton, Municipal League; Captain Thomas Didone, MCPD; Darrel Droblich; Steve Friedman; Arthur Holmes, MCDOT Director;; Alan Migdall; Alyce Ortuzar; Reemberto Rodriguez; Richard Romer representing Councilmember Ervin; David Sharp; Jack Strausman

Members Absent: Colleen Mitchell, Vice Chair; James D’Andrea, MCPS; Peter Moe, MSHA;

County Staff: Jeff Dunckel, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, Will Haynes; MCDOT-DTEO; Nadji Kirby, MCDOT, SRTS; Tom Pogue, MCDOT; Sande Brecher, MCDOT-Commuter Services; Gary Erenrich-MCDOT

Guests: Edna Miller, League of Women Voters; Councilmember Marc Elrich

1. Committee Business:

Chairman Erwin Mack called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm. The minutes from the January 6, 2011 meeting were introduced.

MOTION: A motion to accept the minutes as presented was moved and seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

WMCCAB Meeting: Following up on the January 6 meeting, attempts to meet with Jeff Hearle to discuss next steps have been unsuccessful to date. Jeff Dunckel attended a meeting on March 1 at the BCC Regional Service Center. The issues raised on January 6 were discussed by the Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board’s Subcommittee on Public Safety, and some representatives of civic associations from Western Montgomery County. Dunckel reported the results of that meeting were to submit neighborhood specific issues to MCDOT for consideration, and to submit items that were broader in scope to the PTSAC to request its further consideration of these global issues.

County Executive “Town Hall” Meeting: Mack reported the meeting turned out better than he had expected, with the new format turning out to be a cordial, constructive discussion with Leggett. Mack estimated as many as 250 people attended the meeting, representing 80 different committees. Jack Strausman and Alyce Ortuzar attended with Erwin Mack and Jeff Dunckel. Strausman commented that most comments seemed to center on committee heads making statements about not cutting their organization’s budgets. Dunckel reported that County Executive staff reported the meeting was seen as a success because it allowed a more broad-based discussion of issues, and the format was likely to be repeated in the future. Tom Pogue, also commented that the many agency heads who attended the meeting benefited from hearing the issues of concern to the various committees, boards and commissions in the County.

Pedestrian Collision Data for 2010: Dunckel handed out a table just released by MCPD that had the latest pedestrian collision data from 2010. The good news is there was a decline in total pedestrian collision in 2010, from 455 in 2009 to 436 in 2010. In addition, there was a decrease in pedestrian fatalities for the second year in a row, down from 14 pedestrian fatalities in 2009 to 13 pedestrian fatalities in 2010. In 2008, there were 19 pedestrian fatalities. Cpt. Thomas Didone explained the revised process MCPD is now following to assure that every Pedestrian Collision is recorded accurately in the database. Automated systems are being backed up and cross-checked with a paper reporting system that Didone is reviewing each week. Didone stated that we now know, in fact, that for January and February 2011, there have been a total of 61 pedestrian collisions. That is less than the first two months of past years. The data does not specify those who had disabilities, nor does it

include bicyclists.

2. Transit Task Force – County-wide Bus Rapid Transit:

Mack and Arthur Holmes introduced Councilmember Marc Elrich, citing his history of advocacy and support for improved access to transit in Montgomery County. Elrich showed a PowerPoint presentation on transit systems in other jurisdictions and the concept of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Elrich was attracted to the concept of BRT because it is a cost-effective way to move people. Originally interested in trains and trolleys, Elrich did research that revealed BRT may be the better, more-cost effective option for transit. Though not everyone will take a bus, if enough people take the bus (15% to 20% of vehicle-miles traveled,) our transportation grid-lock can be relieved and economic growth can continue. Lack of a grid road system in Montgomery County creates a challenge for the design of BRT transit systems. Plentiful parking available in urban cores conflicts with the interests of getting cars off the roadways. Elrich cited successful examples (Boston) where parking was restricted and transit and businesses have flourished. The characteristics of the BRT being proposed are: in its own running way, not mixed in traffic; high frequency schedules; routes are linear, without having to take the “scenic routes”; off-bus fare collection (like the Metro SmartCard); use of internet technology; vehicles are unique and interesting; boarding platforms are raised so wheel chairs roll right onto the bus. The existing transit system would be changed: Ride-on would become more of a feeder system to the BRT, taking fewer long trips. Elrich showed pictures of a variety of different systems from the world and the nation, after which he reviewed possible routes in Montgomery County.

Mack asked whether the PTSAC wanted to vote in support of the concept of the BRT. Holmes pointed out that there was already much support for the concept of the BRT, and that now the specifics were being studied. Holmes suggested the committee should be briefed when the more detailed study is complete. Elrich expressed interest in getting input from the PTSAC. Alan Migdall requested that how bicycles are incorporated into the design be studied. Elrich pointed out that where the committee’s support could be important is in letting MNCPPC know that these BRT routes should be included in the Master Plan of Highways. Reemberto Rodriguez asked that populations within ¼ miles (walking distance) of the corridors proposed be included in the analysis. Dave Anspacher asked about how pedestrians and bicycle access were being included in the planning, as transit and pedestrian access fit together.

MOTION: A motion was made and seconded for the PTSAC to express support for the concept of the BRT system being explored by the Transit Task Force. The motion passed unanimously.

Councilmember Elrich stated that he would make this presentation to any citizen, neighborhood group or civic association if asked. He is trying to get the word out on what is being considered.

3. Capital Bikeshare

This topic was first introduced in November; it was decided to invite the County experts to a PTSAC meeting to discuss the efforts of Montgomery County to participate in the Region’s bike sharing program, now operating in Washington, D.C. and Arlington. Sande Brecher and Gary Erenrich are spearheading these efforts for MCDOT. Erenrich provided an overview of the Capital Bikeshare program. The Washington region is second in the nation, behind New York City, in the percentage of commuters (25%) using transit and carpooling. A bike sharing program would reinforce that; biking and walking is only 2.7 % of commuters, which could be improved. The concept of bike sharing is to link the last mile or two of a trip from a transit connection, to your home or office. Bikes are networked through the area destinations for back and forth travel, for short-term use. This system is being widely used in places like Montreal, London, Paris, and Barcelona.

Brecher described the “borrow a bike” program that was launched in North Bethesda as a pilot - - using a library card system. Since then, the Smart Bike program was started in DC, implemented by Clear Channel who did the District’s transit shelter program. Clear Channel backed out of the program. Afterwards, Arlington invited Montgomery County to participate in vendor selection for a program in Arlington - - that could become a region-wide system. This is the Capital Bikeshare program that is being pursued today. Alta/Bixi (of Montreal) were selected as the vendors. There is a great web site that provides a lot of information on the program: capitalbikeshare.com.

Why is this taking so long? This is a capital intensive system that is proprietary - - money must be found if the program is to be implemented. Montgomery County wants to be part of this regional bike-sharing system; how to pay for the system is now the issue being pursued. One bike station with 10 bikes costs \$72,000 for the first year (including installation.) To operate one of these stations for a year costs \$23,000 in operating costs. The County is proposing to do 50 stations, totaling over 1,000 bicycles at locations along the Metro Red Line, at a cost of \$1.7 million. Erenrich described the County’s efforts to obtain grant funding under TIGRE I and TIGRE II. Both efforts failed. MCDOT has been working with Congresswoman Edwards and Councilmember Valerie Ervin to obtain additional financial assistance to implement the program. Steve Friedman pointed out that while this sounds like a lot of money, that the costs need to be compared to the alternative of driving and the costs associated with automobiles. Erenrich reported that a cost/benefit analysis determined there was a positive benefit-to-cost ratio. Erenrich described how the system would likely function, providing improved access to transit - - improving transportation access overall.

Steve Friedman described the committees’ interest in the bike sharing program and bike commuting and asked whether corporate or government sponsorship of the program was possible. Friedman offered to act as a liaison between MCDOT and the PTSAC; Friedman offered to do whatever he could to help move this opportunity forward. John Britton expressed the City of Rockville’s support for this initiative; Britton cited the need to get more information out the public about what this program is - - and how it works. Britton offered that Rockville could help with support for the program. He also mentioned that Revolution Cycles is doing something like this in Crystal City. Cycle Life and Big Wheels Big are two more groups that are situated at strategic locations, said Friedman. Alyce Ortuzar, surprised by the cost of the Bikeshare program, cited the need for more bicycle pathways and bike lanes on the streets. Art Holmes stated that MCDOT approaches its mission in three areas: roadways, transit, and pedestrian mobility (including bicycles.) Ramin Assa asked about the number of participants needed to make this economically viable; Brecher responded the vendor had that information. Assa also thought that \$75 dollars a year was high, as it was only \$10 a year in Barcelona when he was there recently.

Those with questions about the Capital Bikeshare program in Montgomery County are welcomed to contact Erenrich or Brecher:

Gary Erenrich, (240) 777-7156

gary.erenrich@montgomerycountymd.gov

Sande Brecher, (240) 777-8383

sandra.brecher@montgomerycountymd.gov

Action: Erwin Mack asked Steve Friedman to confer with MCDOT and report back to the committee at the May meeting.

4. Subcommittee Reports, Updates, and Recommendations:

Sidewalks-Pedestrian Network Assessment, Ramin Assa reported that a couple of meetings have been held

with Rick Earp, as well as with Transit Services to review their inventory and recent Geo-Wiki application. This technology may be something that can be used for the sidewalk inventory in a pilot neighborhood, as requested by the PTSAC in November, 2010. Assa reported that MCDOT is compiling some candidate locations where a pilot may be conducted. Assa has created a website for use in this effort, called *pedestrian networks*. Information assembled in this effort will be posted on the website. Assa expects to have a couple of proposed pilot locations when the PTSAC meets in May. Transit will be sending the Geo-Wiki links as well, so everyone can see what is possible with an inventory.

Bicycle Access and Safety: Steve Friedman indicated a planning meeting would be held to begin the planning for a Spring Ride-along. Dunkel reported that Peggy Schwartz had indicated an interest in helping with the organizing of such an event; she is the Director of the North Bethesda Transportation Management District (working under the direction of Sande Brecher.)

5. New Business/Committee Comments:

The PTSAC agreed to continue meeting in the 9th Floor Conference Room. Reemberto Rodriguez invited the group to meet in the Silver Spring Civic Building for a future meeting. Mack stated that was very possible; we would look into that.

Panhandling legislation is currently being voted on tomorrow (Friday) at the State Legislature. Didone discussed the history and explained the House of Delegates was going to vote on whether County's could regulate panhandling – either issuing permits to panhandle or banning it altogether. Didone feels soliciting in the roadway creates a hazard and sets a bad example that it is alright for pedestrians to be in the roadway with cars. As there was no time to submit PTSAC testimony prior to Friday's vote, Mack encouraged everyone to contact their delegate as individuals, not PTSAC members, and let them know how they felt about the issue. Mack had Britton explain Rockville's Busking Law for street entertainment - - encouraging street entertainers to "busk" in the Rockville Town Center. "Busking" allows entertainers to solicit personal funds while performing on public property.

David Anspacher announced that the MSHA had officially designated White Flint, under the revised sector plan, as a Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Area (BPPA). This is the first such designated BPPA in the state. This designates the area where bicycle and pedestrian enhancements will be prioritized. This makes the state guidelines for bicycles and pedestrian safety and access more than just guidelines, it makes them policy. If the state is going to do anything on state roads in this priority area, they now must treat pedestrians and bicycles as priorities. This is part of the "Complete Streets" movement that is trying to reexamine how we provide safe roadways for everyone. Anspacher stated that MNCPPC sees this as a huge win. Other BPPAs are now being proposed by MNCPPC. Anspacher asked that the PTSAC consider taking a position on this issue and discuss it at the next meeting.

Adjourn: Meeting Adjourned at 9:32 pm
Next Scheduled Meeting Date: May 5, 2011

H:\CommOutreach\Pedestrian Safety\PTSAC\Agendas-Minutes\Meeting Minutes\2011\March\Minutes for PTSAC 3-3-11-Draft.doc